

# W. EDGAR YATES

William Edgar Yates

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by

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*Fellow of the Academy*

W.E. Yates, always known as ‘Gar’, was a distinguished scholar of German and particularly Austrian literature, and one of the foremost specialists on the work of the great Viennese comic dramatist Johann Nestroy.



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W.E. Yates, always known as ‘Gar’, was born in Hove on 30 April 1938. He was an only child. His father, Douglas Yates (1898–1955), was Reader in German and Head of the German Department at Aberdeen University (a Chair of German was established only later). His mother, Doris Goode (1901–90), trained as a history teacher and later taught children of kindergarten age. After their marriage on 4 March 1924, Douglas and Doris Yates moved to Breslau (now Wrocław in Poland), where Douglas had a post as *Lektor* in English. There he gained his doctorate in 1928 with a dissertation on Grillparzer.<sup>1</sup> His appointment at Aberdeen followed in 1930. Gar spent his boyhood there, in his parents’ large bungalow at the Bridge of Don and at their second home, a large house called Craigmore at Birnam, near Dunkeld in Perthshire.

Gar’s youth, however, was overshadowed by his father’s illness. Douglas Yates had joined the army during the First World War when he was still under age. The lingering effects of a wound sustained in the trenches took the form of a neurological disorder which led to progressive paralysis. He retired early from his Aberdeen post about 1945, having completed the first part of a critical biography of Grillparzer which was published in 1946.<sup>2</sup> Gar was intensely devoted to his father. To ease the strain on his mother (herself suffering from arthritis) of tending an invalid, he was sent to boarding-school at Fettes College in Edinburgh, to which he won a Foundation Scholarship that paid all his fees. When at home in the holidays he spent many hours with his invalid father, talking with him and holding his hand to steady the tremor that was among his symptoms. His own monograph on Grillparzer, published in 1972, not only conveys his own deep and lasting interest in Austria’s great dramatist but is an act of filial homage to his father, who died when Gar was seventeen. His mother lived on until May 1990.

Fettes, with its emphasis on sports, particularly rugby, was probably less than congenial to the relatively unathletic Gar, but he benefited from outstanding teaching in modern languages given by Dick Cole-Hamilton. Gar was enduringly grateful to Cole-Hamilton and remained in touch with him till his death in 1992. It was to Cole-Hamilton’s enthusiastic and effective teaching that he attributed his own success in gaining an Open Scholarship to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, to read French and German.

Before going up to Cambridge, Gar was obliged to do two years’ National Service. He was assigned to the Royal Army Service Corps and stationed – fortunately, when one recalls that a war against Communist guerrillas was going on in Malaya – at Hounslow in West London. Here, as a second lieutenant, he established a reputation for efficiency and also, having time on his hands, managed to pay many visits to the West End theatres and the Royal Festival Hall, the start of a lifelong love of theatre and music.

<sup>1</sup>Published as *Der Kontrast zwischen Kunst und Leben bei Grillparzer* (Berlin: E. Ebeling, 1929).

<sup>2</sup>Douglas Yates, *Franz Grillparzer: A Critical Biography*, Volume I (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946).

At Cambridge Gar benefited from a wide-ranging syllabus that aimed (and still aims) to give broadly equal emphasis to literature, history and thought. Part One of the Tripos was intended to bring undergraduates' linguistic knowledge up to a high standard so that they could easily explore a variety of challenging subjects in Part Two. In the latter, Gar especially enjoyed a course on Austrian literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries. When he undertook a PhD, his subject was Viennese popular comedy and its reception by more literary Austrian dramatists from Grillparzer to Hofmannsthal, under the supervision of F.J. Stopp (1911–79). Although Stopp's professional title was Reader in German Renaissance Studies, his interests extended much more widely; his books included a study of Evelyn Waugh, with whom he shared a devotion to Roman Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> More pertinently, he was also Germanic Editor of the *Modern Language Review*, a position Gar would later hold. Gar recalled him as a demanding supervisor; at all events, under his supervision Gar completed his thesis within three years, a feat much rarer then than it is now.

Gar's research required him to spend some time in Vienna, using the Theatersammlung of the National Library. We have a glimpse of him at this time in the autobiography of his friend Edward Timms, who for a spell shared his lodgings in the Strohgasse in the Third District of Vienna. Edward, who was then writing his Cambridge PhD thesis on Karl Kraus, was talking to the elderly satirist Friedrich Torberg, who wanted him to write an article about Kraus: "What can *you* write about?" he asked, when Gar joined us at the Café Sacher. "About everything," Gar replied. "That's not enough!" was Torberg's riposte. The spirit of the coffeehouse was thriving still, and I returned to my typewriter inspired.<sup>4</sup> Gar was clearly not overawed by a distinguished writer, who in turn had a reply ready for a self-confident young man.

During his doctoral studies, on 6 April 1963, Gar married Barbara Fellowes, likewise a Cambridge graduate in Modern Languages, whom he had known since they were both in their first year. Barbara read French and Spanish at Newnham. Her family name was originally Fuld; her parents had come to Britain in 1936 as refugees from Hitler's Germany. A distant relative – appropriately, in view of Gar's academic interests – was the once famous dramatist and critic Ludwig Fulda (1862–1939), who not only wrote comedies of his own but also translated those of Molière. Barbara would become a schoolteacher and eventually Head of Languages and Director of Sixth Form Studies at St Margaret's, a girls' independent school at Exeter which closed in 2012. She and Gar have two sons: Tom (born in 1971) read Modern Languages at Durham University and is currently Director of

<sup>3</sup>F.J. Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1958).

<sup>4</sup>Edward Timms, *Taking up the Torch: English Institutions, German Dialectics and Multicultural Commitments* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), p. 91.

Corporate Affairs for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and QAA's Company Secretary; and Paul (born in 1975) read Music at Emmanuel, wrote a PhD on the song cycle in 19th-century France, did a law conversion course and is now Counsel at the international law firm Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and heads its global pro bono practice.

In 1963, while still working on his thesis, Gar was appointed to a lectureship in German at Durham. Barbara obtained a teaching post in the nearby town of Spennymoor. Gar immediately plunged into heavy teaching duties. He was required in his first year to give lectures on Hölderlin and in his second on 16th-century literature; the latter subject was new to him. At the same time as working up these lectures and getting through a demanding teaching load, Gar managed to complete his thesis. He met these challenges with the efficiency and industry that would characterise all his subsequent academic work. During his time at Durham he wrote two substantial academic monographs, *Grillparzer* and *Nestroy*, both published by Cambridge University Press in 1972.

This research achievement, supported by many articles and conference papers, earned Gar the Chair of German at Exeter University, which he took up in 1972. He simultaneously became Head of Department, and found that a good deal needed to be changed. There were no German-speaking *Lektoren*. The undergraduates were not required to spend a year abroad. Gar changed all that. He secured *Lektoren* with the help of the Austrian Institute (now the Austrian Cultural Forum) in London, whose director, Bernhard Stillfried, was tireless in stimulating British interest in Austrian culture as a counterweight to the dominance of Germany. Stillfried's energy in supporting a series of rewarding academic conferences on Austrian subjects, and in helping with the foundation of the yearbook *Austrian Studies*, is still remembered with gratitude.<sup>5</sup> Under Gar's predecessor, Henry Garland, what would now be called a research culture was not encouraged. Gar strongly encouraged his colleagues to write articles and monographs. At a time when ingrained prejudices were still common, he was entirely gender-blind in appointments and promotions, and he always treated his loyal secretary, Gisela Fischer, with the respect befitting a fellow-academic. His colleague of many years, Lesley Sharpe, writes:

As a new appointee at Exeter in 1981 I found Gar to be an exemplary mentor. He embodied the all-round academic who combined research, teaching and administration to the highest standards and with total commitment. Though his involvement with the *Nestroy* edition was growing rapidly, his scholarly work was not pursued at the expense of his teaching, which remained inspirational. He was generous with his time and expertise in commenting on my research on Schiller, though it was not central to his own interests. He also introduced

<sup>5</sup>On Bernhard Stillfried (1925–2011) and his work, see the volume edited by Ilona Slawinski and Joseph P. Strelka, *Viribus Unitis. Österreichs Wissenschaft und Kultur im Ausland: Impulse und Wechselwirkungen. Festschrift für Bernhard Stillfried aus Anlaß seines 70. Geburtstages* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), to which Gar contributed 'Nestroy zitiert Grillparzer. Zu Nestroys Anspielungskunst' (pp. 539–46).

me to reviewing for the *Modern Language Review*, of which he was Germanic Editor at the time.

It was inevitable that Gar's conspicuous abilities should draw him into administration. Not only was he Head of Department from 1972 to 1986, but from 1980 to 1983, at the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor, Harry Kay, he became Chairman of the Academic Development Committee, the University's main planning committee. This was the era when, under Margaret Thatcher's premiership, severe cuts in higher education funding threw many institutions into disarray. The responsibility Gar assumed was an unenviable one, but colleagues felt that he enabled the University to steer a humane and judicious course. From April 1986 to September 1989 he was Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Lesley Sharpe recalls:

When that period of major administrative work in the university was over, Gar remained an influential figure, fully engaged with developments within a rapidly changing environment. One particular moment stands out in my memory. Sometime in the mid-1990s, as the audit culture was taking hold and people spent much time trying to formulate their aims and objectives, the senior management at Exeter produced a document that was a kind of mission statement. Staff were invited to a large auditorium for an open meeting to discuss it with the Vice Chancellor. Early in the meeting Gar stood up and pointed out, calmly but forcefully, that there was no mention in the document of any academic values; he then gave a superb, concise statement of the primary function of a university to pursue research and scholarship to the highest standards.

At the same time Gar took on many duties outside the University. From 1980 on he was a member of the committee of the Modern Humanities Research Association. The MHRA's work in supporting academic research deserves to be more widely known than it is. In some respects it fulfils the role that in other countries is performed by an academy of sciences such as the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Austria (where *Wissenschaft* comprehends the humanities quite as much as natural science): it finances long-running projects which even an academic publisher would shy away from, and it supports a string of journals. Thanks to the financial acumen of its long-term Honorary Treasurer, Roy Wisbey (who had been Gar's supervisor in his first year at Cambridge, but then moved to the Chair at King's College London), its healthy position freed it from worrying about the profitability of its enterprises in the short term.

The MHRA's journals include the *Modern Language Review*, which has a General Editor and a team of editors responsible for particular language areas. Gar was its Germanic Editor from 1981 to 1988 (succeeded by Alan Bance, and later by Lesley Sharpe and then myself). I remember how he commissioned my first academic reviews, and how, when I had been (I now think, unnecessarily) negative about a rather slight collection of essays on Kafka, he accepted the review with the words 'Still, the truth must be told'. In one of the

many warm tributes to Gar that Barbara received after his death, Andrew Barker, who retired in 2010 as Professor of Austrian Studies at Edinburgh University, wrote:

Gar was exemplary not just in the standards he set in his own work, but in the specific help he gladly gave others. At the outset of my career – he was then Germanic Editor of the *Modern Language Review* – he published an essay of mine without requiring me to alter a word. This, of course, I took as a terrific compliment. He also wrote me a cover-note, outlining his own disagreement with everything I had written, but emphasising nevertheless the need to publish the piece.<sup>6</sup>

Gar remained a member of the MHRA Committee until 2015. He was also a member of the Council of the English Goethe Society from 1984 to 2009, General Editor (with Hans Reiss) of the monograph series *British and Irish Studies in German Language and Literature*, published by Peter Lang, and a member of the Advisory Board for *Austrian Studies*. His intense involvement with academic life in Vienna will be described following a survey of his own academic achievements.

The two books Gar published in 1972 immediately established him as an authority on two great Austrian dramatists, Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872) and Johann Nestroy (1801–62). Both writers are still somewhat under-appreciated. The understandable bias of *Germanistik* towards Germany as opposed to Austria (and Switzerland) means that Grillparzer can too easily be dismissed as an Austrian epigone of Weimar Classicism, while Nestroy, as a comic dramatist, can fall victim to a prejudice that only ‘serious’ literature really counts. It would be juster to see Grillparzer as a major contributor to the series of tragic dramas that make 19th-century German-language literature so markedly different from its French and English counterparts, and to apply to Nestroy the words of Lessing’s comic heroine Minna von Barnhelm: ‘Kann man denn auch nicht lachend sehr ernsthaft sein?’ (‘Can’t one also be very serious while laughing?’)<sup>7</sup>

The study *Grillparzer: A Critical Introduction* complements and extends the earlier book by Douglas Yates. The father’s book, in keeping with the critical assumptions of the early 20th century, asks how its subject’s experiences, especially his emotional entanglements, are transmuted in his earlier dramas. The son’s book, in accordance with later approaches to literature, separates the life from the works. It opens with a 35-page chapter, ‘Grillparzer’s Life’, a strictly factual, chronological account, which has not yet been superseded (strangely, there is no full-scale biography of Grillparzer in any language), and thereafter focuses on the plays, presenting them in thematic groups along with necessary historical information. Gar emphasises how important it was for Grillparzer to write in Vienna, a city with a living theatrical tradition, where, apart from the hazards of censorship, his plays were sure of reaching the stage. There is a temptation to play him off against

<sup>6</sup>I thank Andrew Barker for permission to include this paragraph.

<sup>7</sup>Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm oder Das Soldatenglück*, Act IV, scene 6.

Schiller, who wrote not for a metropolitan audience but for provincial theatres first in Mannheim and later in Weimar. Among Grillparzer's many strengths, such as psychological subtlety and frequent lyricism, much is made of his plays' intrinsic theatricality, their unfailing expression of meaning through bodily actions and visual effects. Grillparzer's theatrical, i.e. visual, language is contrasted, perhaps unfairly, with 'the rhetoric of Schiller'.<sup>8</sup>

Although the companion volume, Gar's study of Nestroy, is outwardly a rather slim volume (175 pages of text, plus appendices), it condenses a vast amount of information not readily available even in German, and offers a judicious interpretation and evaluation of Nestroy's work.<sup>9</sup> It places Nestroy in the tradition of the Viennese *Volkstheater*, dating from 1711, the year in which Josef Anton Stranitzky established his company in the newly built Theater nächst dem Kärntnertor, just outside the walls which at that time still surrounded the inner city. Popular comedy specialised in three genres: the magical play (*Zauberstück*), descending ultimately from the visual effects of Baroque theatre; the 'local play' combining satire and morality in the portrayal of contemporary manners; and parody, whose targets included Shakespeare (transplanted to Vienna in *Othellerl, der Mohr von Wien*) and Grillparzer (whose *Sappho* was parodied as *Seppherl*, a Viennese contraction of 'Josephine'). All three genres were adapted and enriched by Nestroy, a gifted actor and prolific dramatist, whose witty language often reveals philosophical depth. Nestroy himself, whose stage presence was legendary, played the lead role, always a character with both practical and linguistic resourcefulness. He deserves to stand alongside Molière and Ben Jonson as a master of supremely intelligent farce, and alongside Heinrich Heine and Georg Büchner as a leading socially critical writer of his time. This study, based on minute familiarity with his eighty-odd plays as well as his theatrical context, gives full attention to his linguistic ingenuity, his satirical techniques, and his creative adaptation of other texts: Nestroy often adapted French or English originals (making even a dramatised version of *Martin Chuzzlewit*), and comparisons here reveal much about Nestroy's working methods. Gar also examines Nestroy's radicalism, which mostly had to be damped down because of Metternich's censorship, but flourished in 1848 when the censorship was lifted. Although Nestroy clearly sympathises with the Viennese revolutionaries in his play *Freiheit in Krähwinkel* (which could be freely translated as *Revolution Comes to Sleepy Hollow*), he satirises their excesses as much as he does the misgovernment of the authorities. More broadly, his plays invite sympathy for honest working people and for social underdogs, while mocking the political rhetoric adopted by self-serving careerists. Altogether, *Nestroy* is an admirable introduction to this dramatist, and although the critical edition of Nestroy's works has added enormously to our knowledge, this study still has no

<sup>8</sup> W.E. Yates, *Grillparzer: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> *Nestroy: Satire and Parody in Viennese Popular Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).



counterpart in any language. In 1975 it was awarded the J.G. Robertson Prize by the University of London.

Gar's work on Austrian theatre extends far beyond Nestroy, though he also published a survey of Nestroy criticism<sup>10</sup> and the first thorough biography of Nestroy.<sup>11</sup> In 1992 he brought out a study of two more recent dramatists, Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931) and Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929).<sup>12</sup> The emphasis falls mainly on their comedies: Schnitzler's light but far from lightweight dramas of the 1890s and 1900s, along with his tragicomedies of antisemitism, *Professor Bernhardi* (1912), and of marriage and infidelity, *Das weite Land* (1911); Hofmannsthal's Mozartian comedies *Der Schwierige* (1921) and *Der Unbestechliche* (1923). Rather than engage in negative criticism, Gar largely ignores Schnitzler's dull attempts at serious drama (e.g. *Der einsame Weg*, 1904) and Hofmannsthal's later plays where his conservative agenda is disturbingly apparent (though the tragedy *Der Turm*, 1925, which won the admiration of Walter Benjamin, might have rewarded more attention). The theatrical and biographical setting is explained in ample detail, but with a light touch. The biographical materials here are particularly rich: Hofmannsthal's correspondences with contemporaries have been published mostly in separate volumes; Schnitzler's letters have been collected, but the great event in late 20th-century Schnitzler scholarship was the publication in ten volumes of the diaries he kept from 1879 till shortly before his death in 1931. The diaries at first caused disappointment because so many of the entries are mere jottings such as 'Nm. Spz.' (i.e. *Nachmittag Spaziergang* – 'Walk in the afternoon'); somebody told the editors 'You are editing a telephone directory'<sup>13</sup>; but the patient reader, as Gar pre-eminently was, finds abundant fascinating material.

This body of knowledge is also manifested in *Theatre in Vienna: A Critical History, 1776–1995* (1996), which runs from Stranitzky's arrival in Vienna in 1711 to the reign of the controversial German director, Claus Peymann, at the Burgtheater in 1986. It covers both the Burgtheater, which from 1810 was Austria's national theatre for spoken drama, and the commercial theatres in the suburbs where popular comedy flourished. Opera and operetta are also considered, as are the varying roles played by official censorship before and after 1848. The last few pages are a fine example of Gar's firm but diplomatic judgement. He gives due space to the arguments for and against the iconoclastic approach introduced by Peymann, a striking example of the state-subsidised *Regietheater* (director's theatre) common in German-speaking countries; but the arguments against (commercial

<sup>10</sup> *Nestroy and the Critics* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> 'Bin Dichter nur der Posse'. *Johann Nepomuk Nestroy: Versuch einer Biographie* (Vienna: Lehner, 2012). The nearest counterpart, Walter Schübler's *Nestroy: Eine Biographie in 30 Szenen* (Salzburg: Residenz, 2001), is excellent as a more popular and selective account, but hardly a rival.

<sup>12</sup> *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>13</sup> This comment ('Sie edieren ein Telefonbuch') was reported to me when I visited the Austrian Academy of Sciences, where the diaries were edited, in the mid 1990s.

misjudgement, excessive reliance on political support) weigh most heavily, especially when Gar deploras Peymann's 'relative neglect of the Austrian classics' and, 'when productions have been attempted, their unsympathetic character'.<sup>14</sup> Anyone who has absorbed the whole book will be able to contrast Peymann with Karl Carl (the name is also written Carl Carl), a gifted director who was also a hard-headed and sometimes unscrupulous man of business and whose fortune was founded on recognising and promoting the talents of Nestroy. These books, like all of Gar's academic work, manifest his altogether exceptional command of detail and his distinctive style – clear, firm, free from redundancy – which was not only intellectually but also aesthetically pleasing.

In view of his pre-eminence in the study of drama and theatre, it is easy to forget Gar's equally distinguished publications on poetry. The main outcome was his book *Tradition in the German Sonnet* (1981),<sup>15</sup> which shows a minutely detailed knowledge of even the most obscure byways of German poetry. German poets adopted the Petrarchan sonnet and rejected the Shakespearean model. Sonnet-writing first flourished in the 17th century, discussed in a chapter whose major figure is Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau (1616–79), then sank into disuse till the late 18th century, when its enthusiastic revival was called a veritable 'Sonettenwut' (sonnet mania). Well-known practitioners such as Goethe, Heine and Mörike receive due attention, but so do less-known poets who subscribed whole-heartedly to classical ideals and produced many series of sonnets, notably August von Platen (1796–1835) and the Viennese Josef Weinheber (1892–1945). Analysing the appeal of the sonnet, Gar finds it first in the challenge presented by its exacting formal demands, second in its appeal as an image of formal order and thus a symbolic defence against chaos: it is no coincidence that the sonnet flourished during such upheavals as the Thirty Years War and the Napoleonic Wars.

These conclusions are developed in some remarkable articles that make one wish Gar had written more about poetry. They include a sympathetic appreciation of the work of Weinheber, a poet who since his death has been under a cloud because of his membership of the Nazi Party and because his classical odes, elegies and sonnets can easily seem rather arid. Gar focuses on the sonnet 'Blick vom oberen Belvedere', which describes the view from the upper Belvedere palace northwards across Vienna to the distant hills of the Wienerwald, with Baroque churches to right and left and the medieval spire of the Stefandom in the centre of the prospect. He shows how the poem not only exemplifies formal order but evokes a townscape which is itself an ordered achievement.<sup>16</sup> In another, he traces Mörike's development from a Romantic reliance on inspiration to a classical

<sup>14</sup> *Theatre in Vienna: A Critical History, 1776–1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 240.

<sup>15</sup> *Tradition in the German Sonnet*, *British and Irish Studies in German Language and Literature*, no. 4 (Bern: Peter Lang, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> 'Architectonic Form in Weinheber's Lyric Poetry: the Sonnet "Blick vom oberen Belvedere"', *Modern Language Review*, 71 (1976), 73–81.

aesthetic derived particularly from the later Goethe.<sup>17</sup> Together with his work on Grillparzer, this article finely illustrates Gar's sensitivity to the art of the Biedermeier period (1815–48). Often decried as unambitious and provincial, the best Biedermeier works carry on the aesthetic outlook and also the ideal of humanity ('Humanität') powerful in German literature and thought of the late 18th century. Gar formulated these ideals in his inaugural lecture, *Humanity in Weimar and Vienna: The Continuity of an Ideal*, and explored them also in a little-known article on Paul Celan's early poem 'Die Krüge'. With extensive reference to Hölderlin, he shows how Celan's paradoxical image of jugs drinking at a table transforms the traditional conception of poets as vessels of inspiration or memory, and comments on his rejection 'of that optimistic classical view of the human condition, of the conception of the poet-prophet as a divine vessel'.<sup>18</sup> These concise and rich publications suggest much about the personal values of a modest scholar who shunned the use of the first person singular.

Gar may be best remembered, however, for a scholarly monument of a different order: his leading part in the critical edition of Nestroy's works: Johann Nestroy: *Sämtliche Werke, Historisch-kritische Ausgabe* (Vienna, 1977–2012; abbreviated as HKA). When this edition was first planned in the 1970s, it was expected to contain seventeen volumes: fourteen of texts and three of documentation.<sup>19</sup> In the end there were thirty-eight volumes of text and seven further volumes, including Nestroy's letters and a volume, *Nestroy im Bild*, containing visual representations of Nestroy (who survived into the age of photography). At first the project made only halting progress, but at a meeting in Vienna in January 1992 Gar and Walter Obermaier (then in charge of the manuscript collection of the Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek) were added to the team of General Editors, and the pace quickened, not least thanks to Gar's energy in spurring on the editors of individual volumes.

At the same time the project became more ambitious, in keeping with the complexity of reproducing Nestroy's texts.<sup>20</sup> Only seventeen of Nestroy's plays were published in his lifetime, and those editions were inaccurate and unreliable. The editors needed therefore

<sup>17</sup>'Mörike's Conception of an Artistic Ideal', *Modern Language Review*, 73 (1978), 96–109.

<sup>18</sup>'Mythopoeic allusion in Celan's poem "Die Krüge"', *Neophilologus*, 65 (1981), 594–9 (p. 599). Cf. Hölderlin's 'Buonaparte': 'Heilige Gefäße sind die Dichter, | Worinn des Lebens Wein, der Geist | Der Helden, sich aufbewahrt' – 'Poets are holy vessels | In which the wine of life, | The spirit of heroes, is preserved': Friedrich Hölderlin, *Selected Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 4, 5.

<sup>19</sup>See W.E. Yates, 'Prospects of Progress: Nestroy Re-edited', *Journal of European Studies*, 9 (1979), 196–205 (p. 198).

<sup>20</sup>This account is drastically summarised from W.E. Yates, 'Das Werden eines (edierten) Nestroy-Textes', in W.E. Yates (ed.), *Vom schaffenden zum edierten Nestroy. Beiträge zum Nestroy-Symposium im Rahmen der Wiener Vorlesungen 28.–29. Oktober 1992* (Vienna: Jugend & Volk, 1994), pp. 11–30.

to work from Nestroy's last fair copy (*Reinschrift*). In reconstructing its genesis, they had to begin with the *Vorlage*, the prior text which Nestroy adapted. Nestroy made drafts and sketches, but first of all he made a detailed scenario. All these are valuable as a guide to his intentions. From these Nestroy developed the play and wrote out a fair copy. But the play's genesis did not end there. The fair copy had to be submitted to the censor. Nestroy would circle expressions to which the censor might object and add inoffensive variants above the line. When the play was performed, the original expressions could be restored. The HKA aims to print the drafts as fully as possible, without making the edition unwieldy and unusable. In many cases it also includes, in a tiny font, the entire text of the *Vorlage* (e.g. John Oxenford's *A Day Well Spent*, the basis for *Einen Jux will er sich machen*). Explanatory notes are also required, especially for expressions that would be unintelligible outside Austria. All this imposed a tremendous amount of work on the editors (including the difficulty of deciphering Nestroy's notoriously illegible handwriting), especially since they aimed to complete the edition by 2001, the bicentenary of Nestroy's birth. At one stage a timely archival discovery suggested that he might have been born in 1802, thus permitting delay; but this proved false, and the leeway was not required. All but two volumes, held up for particular reasons, appeared by the deadline.<sup>21</sup> Supplementary volumes and an index followed, so that the whole undertaking was finished in 2012.

Gar himself edited or co-edited eight volumes of texts, comprising twelve plays, plus the two supplementary volumes. He recruited a number of British scholars to the editorial team: his Exeter colleague John McKenzie, Peter Branscombe (Professor of Austrian Studies at St Andrews), and Louise Adey Huish, who has contributed the following reminiscence of working with Gar:

Gar Yates was a dedicated and generous colleague, who welcomed me into the Nestroy project with immense warmth in the early 1990s, after I had listed Nestroy as a research interest in one of the UK registers of Germanists. It probably helped that I had experience of reading Ludwig Tieck's 'unchristliche Hand', as I was initially set to work on the manuscript of *Die Verhängnisvolle Faschings-Nacht*, which existed mainly in exuberant pencil shorthand. Gar and I pored over our respective photocopies of the manuscript, he in Exeter and I in Oxford, until I came up with a more or less credible version of the play from jottings, gobbets and allusive shorthand. Gar's knowledge of Nestroy's autobiography, and the historical and literary context in which he operated, was encyclopaedic; and yet he had a knack of making the flattering assumption that you knew all these things too (but had momentarily forgotten them). In those days before email the letters would fly to and fro – mine to him usually answered by return of post, in exhaustive detail, and with humorous asides which made the sometimes disheartening process entirely palatable. At the same time, he had an eagle eye for detail, and would never allow the merely approximate to

<sup>21</sup> See my review of the edition, 'Tugging the pigtail of fate', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 Oct. 2001, p. 8.

pass, without at the very least raising a quizzical eyebrow, or offering (with apparent humility) the answer you knew you had been looking for all along.<sup>22</sup>

One may well wonder how Gar found time for all his activities, which continued after his retirement from the Exeter Chair in 2001. He joined the Council of the Internationale Nestroy-Gesellschaft, based in Vienna, in 1986, and was its Vice-President from 1997 onwards. He edited the journal *Nestroyana* single-handed from 1992 to 2001, and jointly with Ulrike Tanzer from then till 2009. He was also Vice-President of the Shakespeare Society of Vienna from 1992 to 2002 (the *Sonnet* book contains a substantial chapter on translations of Shakespeare's sonnets). He organised numerous conferences on Austrian theatre, some in Exeter and others in Vienna, and helped to edit the proceedings.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, Gar took seriously his responsibilities towards the local community in Exeter. In 1986 he joined the Board of Governors of Exeter School, within walking distance of his and Barbara's house at 7 Clifton Hill, and in 1994 he took over as Chair, a role he retained for fourteen years. He remained as Vice-Chairman until he stood down from the board in June 2011. He was also Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee from 1994 and a member of the Academic Committee from 2004. A posthumous tribute to his work from the Board of Governors notes:

Gar clearly recognised the difference between governance and management and was always supportive of the school's staff, providing guidance, encouragement and both physical and conceptual resources. He prized intellectual curiosity and academic rigour and he was a superb chair of meetings, as well as a punctilious recipient of official paperwork.

This combination of efficiency and humanity was recognised by many colleagues, especially younger academics who received his praise at conferences and were encouraged to publish their papers. He combined an incisive manner and distinguished presence with warmth and humour. He made it a private rule to do at least a little bit of academic work every day: editorial work, in particular, lent itself to gradual and incremental completion. But the centre of Gar's life was undoubtedly his family. At one time his study contained a small snooker table, and he was always ready to be interrupted at his work to play snooker with one of his sons (also a valuable occasion for father-son bonding). Since then the snooker table has been replaced by a handsome rocking-horse, and his four small grandchildren had similar licence to interrupt him in order to ride on it. He and Barbara were devotees of music (she had introduced him to opera during their student days, and he was

<sup>22</sup> I thank the Rev. Louise Adey Huish for this contribution.

<sup>23</sup> For example, W.E. Yates and John R.P. McKenzie (eds), *Viennese Popular Theatre: A Symposium* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1985), which included Gar's essay 'Nestroy, Grillparzer, and the feminist cause' (pp. 93–107); and (his own favourite) W.E. Yates, Allyson Fiddler, and John Warren (eds), *From Perinet to Jelinek: Viennese Theatre in its Political and Intellectual Context* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001).

particularly fond of Mozart and Richard Strauss). They entertained generously, drawing on a cellar that featured mainly French and Austrian wine.

Gar received many honours, notably the Österreichisches Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst 1. Klasse (2001) and the Ehrenzeichen der Stadtgemeinde Schwechat in Silber (2005). Schwechat is a town on the south-eastern outskirts of Vienna where a conference on Nestroy is held every year; Gar attended regularly and delivered twenty papers between 1976 and 2013. In 1995 he was elected a corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and in 2002 he became a Fellow of the British Academy. In 1998 he was honoured with a Festschrift, a volume of *Austrian Studies* edited by Lesley Sharpe and John McKenzie, on the theme of the Austrian comic tradition – the subject which he had done more than anyone else to put on the academic map.

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